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ABSTRACT

Effective rural education depends on active community involvement. This ethnographic case study examines three models of community organization as an explanation of how community action occurs. The three models are: (1) individuals interacting in formal and informal groups; (2) networks of "weak ties" effective for diffusing information and capitalizing on opportunities created by access to that information; and (3) a centralized weak-tie network based on the premise that a small number of people who know many is more effective than a large number of people who know few. The study attempts to reconstruct events leading various community actors to seek formation of an industrial base as an economic development alternative to agriculture. The study also examines the roles of unique events, specific people, and strategies for the formation of the industrial base in a small community. It was found that unique macroevents played a large role in the community's concern for economic alternatives and in its success in developing those alternatives. Such events also were important to certain community individuals, placing them in key positions to act for industrial development. Thus, community-action strategies were found to be most consistent with the "centralized weak-tie network" hypothesis. However, the irony of this type of centralized leadership network and the type of community action it creates is that its very success at the community level is dependent on only a select segment of the community having a vital say, thus excluding the community population as a whole. (TES)

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How Do Communities Act? Unique Events and Purposeful Strategies in the Formation of an Industrial Base in Rivertown

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How Do Communities Act? Unique Events and Purposeful Strategies in the Formation of an Industrial Base in Rivertown

Abstract

Using an ethnographic case study, this research examines three competing hypotheses of how a community acts. The study attempts to reconstruct the events which led various actors in the community to seek the formation of an industrial base as an alternative economic source for the community. The roles of unique events, specific persons and particular strategies in the formation of the industrial base are examined. It was found that unique events play a very important role in the community's concern over economic alternatives to agriculture and their success in securing such alternatives. These events were also important to key individuals within the community, placing them in positions to act in the industrial base formation. Strategies of community action used in the industrial base formation and since that time were found to be consistent with the "centralized weak-tie network" hypothesis of action organization. This type of community action oraganization seems to be very effective at the community level but tends to be very exclusionary of the community population as a whole.

How Do Communities Act? Unique Events and Purposeful Strategies in the Formation of an Industrial Base in Rivertown

INTRODUCTION

Do Communities Act?

Do communities act? Tilly (1973), says "Yes." He argues that social action will take place at the community level (rather than through differentially specialized interest groups) in communities which are more homogeneous, whose members are in close proximity to each other and who share a common economic value in land as opposed to other factors of production.

How Do Communities Act?

Interactional Field and Collective Action

If communities do act; "How do they act?" Luloff (1990:216) insists that Tilly's question must be carried to this logical next step. Whereas Tilly saw action as a consensual response of the people in the territorially bound community to an outside force, Luloff warns that,

> [t]o limit the ability of the community to act to those cases where either consensual responses occurred or where situations/conditions external to it stimulated the critical initiating role is to ignore the vital roles played by central actors in the local community.

To Luloff, communities act through individuals interacting in formal and informal groups and networks. This line of reasoning

coincides with the interactional or field perspective of community (see Lewin, 1935; 1951; Kaufman, 1959; and Wilkinson 1970). Consistent with much of the collective action literature, interactional field perspective sees community action taking place only when sufficient amounts of individuals with common interests combine to pursue a goal (for review see Olson, 1965; Chamberlain, 1974; Marwell and Ames, 1979; Hardin, 1982; Marwell and Oliver, 1984; Oliver, 1984; Oliver et al., 1985; Oliver and Marwell, 1987).

The concern here is that communities which can not get a "critical mass" of individuals with common interests to interact, do not act. Luloff concludes one of the main reasons certain communities do better than others in collective action is because they are more "democratic." In other words, there are more than just a "handful" of influential actors collectively making decisions for the community. Rather, the populace, as a whole, potentially have a say in community action and its goals.

Finally, to better understand how communities act and why some do better than others in collective action, Luloff (p.226) suggests a qualitative approach. He argues that the focus on structural indicators and in particular "Characteristics of population aggregate[s]" have ignored "important insights into patterns of individuals and organizations in associational action." A qualitative approach would be able to assess these types of relationships at the level where they occur and thus avoid the problem of aggregated generalizations to the community level.

Weak-Ties; Centrality of Networks and Collective Action

An approach which goes beyond the intuitively obvious notion of individuals with common interests interacting to produce collective action, looks at what types of interaction produces this action. Granovetter (1973) argues that strong intimate networks of interaction among individuals are not as important as weak or "loosely coupled" ones for diffusion of information and capitalizing on opportunities created by access to information.

> The contention here is that removal of the average weak tie would do more 'damage' to transmission probabilities than would that of the average strong one. [T]his means that whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance (i.e., path length) when passed through weak ties rather than strong (Granovetter, 1973:353).

According to Granovetter's formulation, a community with many weak-ties will be able to disseminate the information and resources necessary to organize collective action better than one which is oriented more toward strong personal ties.

Marwell et.al., (1988) however, argue that it is not the existence of weak ties per se which makes it easier for certain communities to organize collective action but the distribution of these ties. Through computer simulated models of networks they found that highly centralized weak ties in a community were better for organizing collective action than any other type of network pattern. Centralized networks are "concentrated in a few individuals rather than being spread more evenly across the whole group (p.506)." For example, a small number of people who know most everybody versus a large amount of people who know

only a few others.

The implications of Marwell et. al's. finding is that collective action is likely to begin with a single individual who has the resources to organize others. One of these resources would be knowledge of who to expend his/her other resources (such as time, commitment or finances) on. Organizers will concentrate their efforts on recruiting the right people, not the right amount of people. The right people are the ones which will give the largest return back to the organizer for his/her resources spent.

> [W]e belive that organizer-centered mobilizations are the rule rather than the exception and that most collective goods are produced by actions that originate with one person (or a few people) who plans a campaign and purposely seeks to draw others into it (Marwell et. al., 1988:529).

Therefore, it is centralized weak-tie networks which create collective action. Counter to Luloff's conception of the viable acting community having a greater degree of democracy, (i.e., participation by the populace) Marwell et. al., (p.532) argue, "[t]here is generally no need for all the aggrieved population to be mobilized and no need for all the members of a population to be mutually reachable." The organizer can selectively choose those people who will maximize his/her agenda for action. Its a question of who you know and can recruit, not how many.

Organizer networks attract leaders of other organizations. Leadership in an organization creates a privileged position in a centralized weak-tie network. It is the business of many of these leaders to know who is doing what?, who has what? and how can I get it if I need it? Therefore the viable acting community

to Marwell et. al., is one which has a highly centralized weak-tie network incorporating leaders of key organizations.

In addition, to assess their assertions they suggest that

> Case studies might indicate whether collective actions tend to be coordinated through the leaders of organizations (favoring the centralization analysis) or through nonleaders who use organization as a recruiting ground for events outside the aegis of the organization (favoring the weak-ties analysis) (Marwell et. al., 1988:532).

Each of the three hypotheses of community action discussed above have a common element; i.e., for the community to act there must be purposeful action by individuals. Coleman (1986:1312) argues that any theory of purposeful action must take into account two central theoretical concerns. They are: "how the purposive actions of the actors combine to bring about system-level behavior, and how those purposive actions are in turn shaped by constraints that result from the behavior of the system."

To address these two concerns, Coleman (p.1328) concludes that statistical measures alone are not enough. He argues that "associations between variables [have] largely replaced meaningful connection between events as the basic tool of description and analysis" in sociology and that surveys and statistics are poor ways of capturing the purposive intentions of interacting individuals. He does add however, that

> [I]t is possible to move with empirical research a step beyond the examination of isolated micro-to-macro relations, toward studying a system of action. That is what social historians and ethnographers have traditionally done using qualitative data. This research is ordinarily descriptive in character without theoretical aspirations, though it may well provide insights for theory construction (p.1332).

This analysis employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and does have theoretical aspirations. The analysis will attempt to address the following points: a) explication of the role of individual actors in community action; b) avoidance of overaggregated levels of measurement (sampling of individuals to explain community level phenomena); c) use of qualitative methods to focuses on "patterns of individuals and organizations in associational action" and not on structural indicators; e) empirical assessment through case study of competing hypotheses of "How do communities act?"

METHODS

The Data and Its Collection

The data used for the analysis were gathered through four successive phases in a small Missouri community over a combined period of nine months (March 1989 to November 1989). One aspect of this community which makes it very unique in relation to other communities similar in size and geographic location is its large industrial base. An effort to better understand how the community "acted" to develop this industrial base comprises the framework of the analysis.

The goal of the first phase was to obtain a general picture of the community and its actors. An overview of the community's origins through recorded histories were analyzed as well as

considerable time spent in the community itself making first hand observations of the present physical and social layout. Additionally, several informal interviews and conversations were conducted with people in the community concerning the history and other aspects of the community.

The second phase, an updated version of Hunter's reputational method, identified contemporary community leaders (Trounstine and Christensen, 1982)[1].

The third phase consisted of semi-structured interviews of the 15 most influential people in the community as identified by the panelists in the second phase. Interviewers questioned these people about identified issues which required the community to mobilize resources in some type of collective response. They were also asked some basic network questions drawn from the General Social Survey.

The fourth phase consisted of following up on leads created by the other three phases through intensive interviews and theoretical sampling techniques using a variation on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "grounded theory" approach. In this phase, the data were gathered, systematically analyzed, and conclusions drawn before a major review of the literature was conducted. The literature review represents an ongoing theoretical context in which the findings can be framed. If and when there is

[1] A panel of community members, each representing a different sector of the community (Clergy, Business/ Professional, School, Newspaper, Farm/Agriculture, City and or County Government, and Local Historian) were selected to choose the 15 most influential people in the community from a list of names compiled from a positional chart.

convergence with the emerging theory and the literature base, a measure of validity in the data gathered has been achieved. Quotations used in the presentation of the analysis represent summary examples of general themes expressed by other interviewees as well and are to be regarded strictly as representational of all interviews.

Data Analysis

The Community

"Rivertown" represents one of seventeen communities in the Northwest region of Missouri which in 1980 had a population under 2,500 but over 1,000. Each of these seventeen communities were rated against five criteria[2] and then ranked against each other based on their average rank on the five criteria. Higher ranking communities were considered more-viable. Rivertown scored fifth out of the seventeen and was considered one of the more viable communities in the region.

Established in 1836, Rivertown is located on the bluffs along the Missouri River and is rich in "bottoms" farm land. The first citizens were predominately "wealthy people...from Kentucky and Virginia (Personal interview with local historian: 10/9/1989)"

[2] Percent population change 1970-1980; Per capita sales tax revenue 1987; Percent change in high school enrollment 4 grades, school years 1977/78-1987-88; Retail business score based on presence or absence of eight selected businesses; Medical service score based on presence or absence of seven selected medical services.

whose primary economic product was tobacco produced by slave labor on large estates. Today the community is around 70-75% German Catholic with a few Methodists, Baptists and German Lutherans. The community is often identified by both locals and non-locals as "a German Catholic town." The first Germans arrived in the community around the turn of the century and settled into farming the bottom lands along the river. They were generally less educated and wealthy than their English protestant neighbors and were characterized by them as "working class" "hard working" "land type farmers" "frugal" and "industrious."

Many people in the community feel that Rivertown became a predominately German Catholic town by natural increase of their numbers over the English protestants. Due to religious prohibitions toward birth control the German Catholics had much larger families than did the English. A cultural tendency to pass the farm holdings down to the children in the German farm family has also kept their children in the community.[3]

One obvious aspect of Rivertown, even to the most casual observer, is the large industrial base which has formed in this community of 1,300. Many local citizens speak of advantages over other area communities in terms of economic viability and population retention due to employment opportunities through the

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[3]. For a very good anthropological study on the cultural practice of German Catholic farmers and farm communities in the Midwest see Salamon, (1985). Salamon found that German Catholics' primary concern in farming is not to optimize returns, it is to "replicate family farm and family land ownership in each generation" (p.325).

local industries. "With out this [industry] there wouldn't be a Rivertown today. It would be a ghost town..I just don't think there would be a town here if we hadn't had the industry (Personal interview with small industry owner: 10/12/1989)." Frequent reference is made to one individual in particular as the "Backbone" behind the formation of the industrial base. Other people are often refered to as well as playing key roles in its formation.

The Formation of an Industrial Base

Changes in Agriculture and Transportation

By the late 1930's early 1940's, Rivertown's farmers were experiencing dramatic changes in agriculture. Farms were getting bigger and requiring less people to keep them operating. "About that time the larger tractors started to move in and people needed, well they just had to have more land to make a living (Personal interview with small industry owner: 10/12/1989)."

> The trend with agriculture has been, the farms have gotten bigger. A lot of the young farmers have left, and the older ones have sold out. You will have one person living where you used to have half a dozen people. Taking care of that whole area. So your farm population has really shrunk. The acreage is there, I mean the're still farming the same acreage, it just doesn't take as many people (Personal interview with local historian: 10/9/1989)."

The farm economy began to account for less of the community's economy. "Basically we realized that the farming industry wasn't going to keep things going. Farming had gotten to where they were going to need some additional income to keep going

(Personal interview with mayor of Rivertown: 10/26/1989)."

Changes in transportation also effected the community. In the late 1800's, the community was on the major rail road crossing of the Missouri River heading west from St.Louis. There were two passenger trains that stoped in Rivertown daily. However, by the late 1930's and early 40's the passenger trains passed by Rivertown without stopping. One rail line even pulled up its track. Today, a freight train stops on demand for shipments from the local coop and industries. It is rumored at the time of this writing that that too is soon to go.

Other changes in transportation, not unlike those mentioned by the Lynd's in their Middletown study (Lynd and Lynd, 1929), include automobiles and better access to other larger communities for greater varieties of services. Transportation networks such as highways also improved. Rivertown is intersected by three highways which gives its citizens' easy access to other places.

Changes in the agricultural economy and transportation are most commonly blamed for some rather marked declines in the Rivertown business district, and are commonly sighted to explain why the community by the mid 1950's began looking for other economic alternatives to supplement agriculture and retail. But who was "the community" and how did they act?

Who Acted?

In 1958, six influential political and business leaders in the community chartered a local "Community Development

Corporation" with the state of Missouri. The corporation was established to provide a "legal structure [to] help set up the framework to get a building built and lease it to [the "Howard" co.] (Personal interview with current president of Rivertown Community Development Corporation (RCDC): 11/09/1989)." Before this time there had been a small group of business people in the community with an interest in attracting and maintaining industry but they were not officially organized as a legal entity.

In the same year, the owner of a recreational/camping equipment company ("Howard Co.") inquired at the Missouri state capital about locating a plant in Rivertown. The owner ("Davis"), already had one plant in a German Catholic community in Missouri similar in size to Rivertown. He expressed a strong interest in Rivertown as a site location because

> they figured it was something similar to the same type of labor and so forth as the [other town] plant was. It was a German settlement down there too. Thats one of the things they looked at and one of the things thats keeping them going here is they like the type of labor that they get here. They relized there was a good work ethic here (Personal interview with current president of RCDC: 11/09/1989).

The plant location came down to two communities in Missouri, Rivertown being one of them. Davis had expressed a personal interest in locating in Rivertown because it was a German Catholic town similar to the one in which he already had a successful venture. His interest in Rivertown was so keen, working through the Chamber of Commerce, he personally organized some of the key people in the community and instructed them on how to further organize to finance a building project. There was

"no money and no state funding to help (Personal interview with founding member of RCDC: 10/19/1989)" the community had to come up with the necessary money to finance the venture. Therefore to raise the money, a legal structure had to be formed and empowered with the ability to sell bonds. Davis told them that through the bond sells, if the community would build a building, he would locate his plant there.

The result was the "Rivertown Community Development Corporation (RCDC)." Through the RCDC several key people who controled various key resourses in the community were recruited to help sell the project and the bonds to finance it. However, before the newly formed RCDC acted in the name of the community and contracted with Davis on the building they sought a mandate from the community to proceed.

Organized through the RCDC and sanctioned by the city council, a community wide meeting was called. The meeting took place in the ball field at the local High School. Several community leaders which included the mayor, members of the city council and several prominent business people[4] presented the proposal by the Howard Co. An appeal was made to the people that the community was in need of other sources of revenue and that this represented a good option. The Howard Co. was stable and had a large 17 year contract with Sears Robuck Co. so there was no fear of a fly-by-night operation. Many people had reservations about whether or not this was the right thing for the community to do. Previously the community had had a negative experience with a couple of small industries. "The town

had had some experience with some light industry..they just leased some buildings downtown here, it didn't work out too well..It was kind of a shirt-tail operation and they were perhaps using the community, the individuals involved (Personal interview with current president of RCDC)."

In the end, the people of the RCDC felt they had enough support from the people of the community to try and raise the funds and bring in the Howard Co. With a legal organization already set up to pull the venture off, the next task was to recruit people into the organization who could tap into needed resources. Shares in the corporation were sold at $100 a piece, and were bought primarily by business people in the community. The shares acted as "seed money" to get the organization chartered and off the ground. There were 15 shares sold. Those who purchased them saw them primarily as "a donation" to the corporation.

The primary people recruited into the RCDC included the mayor, a banker, a car dealer, and a small industry owner (all local people). The resources these people controled were knowledge of those in the community and surrounding area and of their finances. The banker expressed that it was due to his knowledge of who had substantial financial resources that he was "drafted" into the RCDC. Other people were "drafted" to help sell bonds but did not join the corporation. One such person was an implement dealer who knew a majority of the farmers in

[4]There was at least one woman very involved in this enterprise, she was the newspaper owner at the time.

the area. Along with one of the large local farmers, the two cased the surrounding farming area to sell bonds.

All those involved in the project knocked on "all the doors in the entire area (Personal interview with founding member of RCDC: 10/12/1989)" in an effort to sell bonds. At the same time,

> In 1959 somebody took a picture of all the high school seniors out here on the slopes of the high school grounds and segregated them into 3 groups, who was going to stay in Rivertown and who was going on. They all held up little signs or something. There were 2 or 3 who were undecided out of 35 or 40 students [only a couple were going to stay]. But the Farm Journal picked up on this thing and ran it as "Who Will Stay in Your Small Community?" It didn't mention Rivertown in the article but then everybody recognized the school and the students. It was about the time we got organized. Coincidental in that the newspaper editor ran an article about we need to invest in this project [Howard] to keep our young people from leaving..I think it helped to sell the bond issue. Though the people that worked hard in it tend to think that their zealousness in selling did it, I'm sure that is true too (Personal interview with current president of RCDC: 11/09/1989).

With a combination of hard door to door work and a powerful piece of coincidence, they sold $260,000 worth of bonds in less than two weeks (As recounted by two past founding memebers). Having raised the money they built a building and a housing project near it and successfully brought the Howard Co. into the community. Since that time, the development corporation and other groups in the community have used the same organizing and finacing strategy for various other projects in the community[3].

An interesting point is that the strategy for organizing and mobilizing was introduced to the community from the outside by someone who had an economic interest in the community. The technique he introduced has been very influential in the

community since. This particular mobilization strategy and a "German cultural propensity to organize (Personal interview with city banker: 11/09/1989)," have worked well in combination to produce an effective strategy for collective action at the community level in Rivertown.

Perhaps the two most influential people in the community in forming and maintaining the development corporation and the industrial base were the car dealer and the small industry owner. The car dealer is deceased, however, one person described him and his role in the formation of the development corporation in the following way:

> [He] had founded the development corp. He may not have been president of it, he had hand picked puppets basically later. But he was the point man to talk to these sophisticated individuals [from the Howard Co.]. Local people felt intimidated but [he] was in World War I as a payrole officer or something and he had a lot of confidence and sophistication and that really helped...[He] was always forward looking. But it was a challenge for a guy like him. He was quite talented in the automobile business, and he was a suave businessman, you would instantly recognize it, he was quick with cards and just had a quick mind (Personal interview with current president of RCDC: 11/09/1989).

The small industry owner ("Meyer") had purchased a small wood

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[5]Similar organizing strategies have been used in the community since the formation of the industrial base and The Howard Co. to fund the building of a nursing home. Also, in 1984, when the bridge over the Missouri River was targeted for much needed repair and was to be closed, it was Rivertown's responsibility to compensate for the bridge's absence while under repair. The community successfully raised money through donations to hire a ferry company during the repair period. The mayor appointed the preseident of the RCDC to organize the effort. They formed a non-for-profit organization similar in structure to the RCDC and solicited donations through the organization to raise money. "This had been the only successful ferry on the Missouri River up to that time (Personal interview with the mayor of Rivertown: 10/26/1989)."

pallet plant in 1956. Before that time he had worked in an implement dealership in town and had farmed as well. Meyer was born and raised in a small farming community on the Missouri River bottoms just a few miles north of Rivertown. In 1951 the River flooded its banks and wiped out the community and displaced over 100 families. Most all of these families primary economic production was in agricultural. Many of them never returned to the farm and took up residence in Rivertown. To many within the community, this was a sign of things to come in agriculture. It helped "the community" realize that they needed to do something about the loss of farmers and their economic contribution to the community. Meyer and his family also moved into Rivertown. In 1956 he left the impliment business to look for "something different." "We had the industrial woodworking [pallet] plant here that had 5 employees. The owner died real suddenly of a heart attack and I saw this as an opportunity and I bought the plant (Personal interview with Meyer: 10/12/1989)."

The purchase of this plant placed Meyer in an extreemly important position in the community. He was very active in the formation of the RCDC and has been active in it since. Through it, he has expanded his own industry and helped attract others to the community. The people of the community refer to him as the "backbone" of the industrial base. Meyer has an eighth grade education and had had no experience in industry up to the time of his purchase of the pallet factory.

The above discussion presents several issues concerning the formation of the industrial base in Rivertown: changes in

agriculture and transportation; a cultural dimension, i.e., the Howard Co. owner who wanted to locate his plant in a German Catholic town; the flood of 1951 and the heart attack of the pallet plant owner which helped propel Meyer into the industral "business;" a suave confident business man who was accustomed to dealing with "sophisticated" people; and finally, the Farm Journal article appearing at the same time the RCDC was trying to sell bonds for the Howard Co. building. Most of these events in the creation of the industrial base in Rivertown are unique to Rivertown alone and are not generalizable to other communities. However, the analysis of the formation of the industrial base revealed many things that are not necessarily unique to Rivertown which the people of the community employ as strategies for collective action. What are these strategies?

How Rivertown Acts: Mobilization Through Key People in Key Organizations

> We have no organized negative group of people. Some people in the neighboring communities seem to have a block of people who are negative. The other communities don't have the structure to get unity or support for some things. They always say that about Rivertown [that they are united and get support] but I think if they would just get the structure set up like we have always had it. But then people would say thats because of the German culture, they always want to structure things like Germans have always done even in their own country (Personal interview with current RCDC president: 11/09/1089).

It was explained by the above individual that "structures" reffered to specific organizations in the community, namely, "the Development Corporation" "the Chamber of Commerce," "the City Council," and "Rotary." The Rotary and Chamber of Commerce

are particularly key in Rivertown because they represent the business community whose interests and actors lay not only within the city limits but in the larger community as well. This is not the case for the City Council whose "official" range of influence ends at the city limits. The City Government however, does play an important gatekeeping role for the other community organizations.

> Most everything comes into the mayor first. And then he could try and determine if it was something the City Council could solve, if it was totally a city problem or if it involved the greater community. The Chamber of Commerce encompasses more than political leadership of the town. It encompasses self-interested people with a vested financial stake in the community. [If the City Council concludes it is a larger community problem they turn it over to the Chamber of Commerce]. Then the Chamber of Commerce would take a look at it and then maybe appoint a committee in the community or use the substructured organizations like Rotary club (Personal interview with current RCDC president: 11/09/1989)."

There is "a structure set up" in Rivertown to get the community mobilized. This structure is composed of influential leaders (many of which were on the original RCDC), who are "the executives of the structured organizations...If there is a crisis in the community we just call a couple of business people together and consider relocating the highway, or we hear gossip that the state wants to do this or that, Meyer calls a bunch of us together, we get a committee appointed and we go to work on it (As recounted by the current president of the RCDC: 11/09/1989)." One person said that any time somebody gets a piece of information they will call one of these executives of the organizations and get a meeting organized. These people will then call

> the president of the Chamber of Commerce if he /she is not already aware of the meeting] plus they will call a few bankers and are hopeful they just know who is willing to go to a meeting like that. They know that some businessman, he never would attend such a meeting, thats all known. Its common knowledge. You know who your worker bees are. You know everybody's weaknesses (Current president of the RCDC: 11/09/1989).

The mayor of Rivertown expressed a similar scenario about informing the public of an issue facing the community.

> The best way I can explain that is if you can explain to them properly that they feel like it is something you need, you don't have any problems. You throw it out in front of them. ["How?"] Meetings. We have different clubs, like Rotary club, and Lions club. Chamber of Commerce is a big thing here. If there's ever anything that comes up its presented to the Chamber of Commerce to get their backing on it. If you can get their backing, the clubs, its just never been too much problem to get people's support (Personal interview: 10/26/1989).

In Rivertown it is apparent that influential individuals acting through community organizations represents one of the keys to how the community acts. The organizational leadership must stamp an issue with their approval. "They [the leaders] will always back anything that is positive. That sends signals to those who don't want to get involved, and they will generally support you at the polls or they will support you by not speaking negative against an issue (Interview with city banker: 11/09/1989." Mobilization of community action in Rivertown through the executives of its structured organizations takes on a very "top down" approach. One person expressed that it was extemely rare for the community to mobilize from the "grass roots."

Mobilization from the top down through primarily business

organizations (with the mayor acting as gatekeeper) excludes certain segments of the community who have no representation through these organizations. Rivertown has about an 8% black population. In every interview conducted when asked about the blacks in the town, respondents complained that blacks rarely, if ever, got involved in community projects. There are no black business people in the community, consequently there are none involved in the Chamber of Commerce or Rotary. There has only been one black business person in town. He sat on the City Council and had been active in the various business organizations. He is spoken of highly by the current community leadership. He is, however, deceased. His death has left a hole that has not been filled by anyone in the current black community.

This lack of representation in the black community places blacks in a very marginal position in Rivertown in terms of effectuating community action in their benefit. Blacks in the community as a whole are economically disadvantaged and generally earn their living from the local industries as common laborers.

How different groups in the community, such as the blacks, may be more or less effective in mobilizing their interests is illustrated in the following example cited by the mayor as the only example anyone could think of where the community failed to pass some type of bond or tax issue. "We did have a tax election fail a couple of times several years ago because we were trying to put it on property tax. And we backed off from that and put

it on sales tax and it went through just like that [as he clicked his fingers] (Personal interview: 10/26/1989)." A property tax versus a general sales tax would disproportionately effect the more wealthy segment of the community while a general sales tax would disproportionately effect those who are more confined to the community itself for their goods and services. The property tax was voted down twice, while the sales tax passed with no problem.

Rivertown appears to rely heavily on the representation of a very specific group in the community for its collective action, i.e., "the business class," as one person reffered to them as [4]. This group of people's
interests are represented through the leaders of the key mobilizing organizations in the community. The business organizations. The leaders of these organizations recognize very clearly their influential roles. Well defined exclusionary practices are used to maintain their control over these organizations. This accomplishes a couple of things. First, there is little turnover in the influential organizations' leadership. This allows for a certain degree of continuity and stability in the networks these people have created for tapping into valuable resources and information and for pursuing agendas

[4] The second phase of this research revealed a high degree of concensus regarding the "most influential leaders" in the community. There was no deviation between who the 7 informants picked as the top 3 leaders and who the 15 identified leaders themselves picked. In addition, the leader ranked number one received a score of 20 out of a possible 21 in the informant survey. Clearly, Rivertown knows who its most influential leaders are.

at the community level which coincide with their personal long term interests. Second, established networks into resources do not have to be re-established on a consistent basis. This gives the community, as a whole, a sense of history in being able to get things done when there is "a need." We have already established who's need.

> One of the best things that we have going here is if you are on the city council or on the school board and you want to get off, you just don't quite. You go and talk someone else into running. That way you self-anoint someone who can get things done. The problem is if you leave it wide open somebody who is not very capable or who has a grudge to bare will sign up at the last minute. And then of course they will get elected, there is no opposition. I picked my City Council replacement (Interview with current RCDC president: 11/09/1989)."

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In the building of an industrial base, the importance of individuals and events, unique to Rivertown, can not be underscored enough. Clearly, the processes and specific results of Rivertown's collective mobilization efforts and the motivations for them do not lend themselves to broad theoretical generalizations. What in many analyses may be considered "noise" (i.e. "random" or unique events) becomes the fiber that binds a general theoretical explanation to a concrete case. What is generalizable about Rivertown, in terms of collective action, is only understandable through the actions of individuals as they respond to unique events which personally effect them.

The Rivertown case shows how specific individuals as key actors became involved in the formation of an industrial base in

the community, often by coincidence. These people as well as the community as a whole were effected by larger macro events such as the changes in agriculture and transportation as well as the flood in 1951. The examination of the roles played by individuals in the community attempts to address not only the over aggrigation problem with other research on community action, but the macro to micro relationship of a social theory of purposive action as well. Finally, the rational, strategies and practices of people involved in the formation of the industrial base and mobilization of other community actions draws a link between the actions of a purposeful actor and macro level consequences of his/her actions.

In the introduction, three competing general hypotheses of how a community acts were presented. In the case of Rivertown, mobilization and community action appears to take place through leaders of key business and city government organizations within the community. Community wide support in Rivertown is sought only after an issue has been addressed and sanctioned by the influential people who occupy the top positions within these organizations. These people have well established networks which they can tap into for needed resources as well as a general sense of history working in their favor as "people who can get things done." Community action does not appear to be very democratic in the Tocqueville image of participitory democracy. Incumbants of top positions in these key organizations appear to make most of the major community action decisions. In addition, they also employ exclusionary practices in filling position

vacancies, thus representing their own interests after their own incumbency by placing people with similar agendas into the positions.

From the analysis, of the three competing hypotheses, Rivertown more closely approximates Marwell et. al's theoretical conception of what type(s) of networks facilitate community action. However, the irony of a centralized leadership network and the type of community action it creates is that its very success at the community level is dependent on only a select segment of the "whole community" having a vital say. It may be more accurate to talk of action by a few having community level consequences than to talk of "community action."

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